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The Star-Ledger

FREEHOLD

Lingering mystery ends in tragedy

Remains of missing woman found: Ex confessed in suicide note, officials say

Joined by members of the Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office on Monday in Freehold, Ed and Sharlene Parze thank the community for searching since their daughter Stephanie Parze disappeared. *Patti Sapone, for The Star-Ledger*

Alex Napoliello and Avalon Zoppo *For The Star-Ledger*

The day after the body of 25-year-old Stephanie Parze was found in the woods off Route 9 in Old Bridge, authorities on Monday revealed that her ex-boyfriend had admitted to killing her in a note he wrote to his parents before he took his own life in November.

About 2:45 p.m. on Sunday, two teens, ages 17 and 18, walking south on Route 9 found Parze's body just south of Old Mill Road in Old Bridge.

The Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office announced Monday morning that a medical examiner had confirmed the remains were Parze's.

The cause of Parze's death has not yet been determined, said Monmouth County Prosecutor Christopher J. Gramiccioni.

The prosecutor was joined at a news conference Monday by the Parze family, who thanked the community for the extensive searches since Parze disappeared in October.

"This is an extremely somber day for us. Our lives are never going to be the same," her father, Ed Parze, said, choking back tears. "Stephanie is home — she's coming home, at last, where she belongs."

John Ozbilgen, 29, had previously been identified as a person of interest in the disappearance of Parze before he committed suicide.

In the note Ozbilgen left, he wrote that "He had had enough and he could not do life in prison," Gramiccioni said. "He also admitted that what his parents would hear in the news was true except for charges of child pornography.

"Ozbilgen acknowledged he had dug himself a deep hole," the prosecutor continued. "He never disclosed where he disposed of Stephanie's remains."

Gramiccioni said the investigation remains ongoing, but prosecutors are confident Ozbilgen acted alone in killing Parze.

"That guilt belongs to John Ozbilgen and John Ozbilgen alone," he said.

The Ozbilgen family attorney, Richard E. Incremona, told NJ Advance Media that the family's "sincere condolences and heartfelt feelings go towards Ms. Parze's family."

"In terms of the prosecutor's conclusions," Incremona said, "they have their own feelings and opinions of that. I don't see a point in expressing that in any detail."

Gramiccioni said his office brought in the Parze family shortly after they found the suicide note and spoke with them about it "in

SEE PARZE, A8

Stephanie Parze, 25, of Freehold, had been missing since Oct. 30. Her body was found Sunday in Old Bridge. *Courtesy photo*

A look back at the life and career of Kobe Bryant. B4

IMPEACHMENT

GOP defends Trump as Bolton book adds pressure for witnesses

Eric Tucker, Zeke Miller and Lisa Mascaro
Associated Press

Senators faced mounting pressure Monday to summon John Bolton to testify at President Donald Trump's impeachment trial even as Trump's lawyers brushed past extraordinary new allegations from Trump's former national security adviser and focused instead on corruption in Ukraine and historical arguments for acquittal.

Outside the Senate chamber, Republicans grappled with claims in a forthcoming book from Bolton that undercut a key defense argument — that Trump never tied withholding military aid to Ukraine to his demand that the country help investigate political rival Joe Biden.

The revelation clouded White House hopes for a swift end to the impeachment trial, fueling Democratic demands for witnesses and possibly pushing more moderate Republican lawmakers toward such testimony. It also distracted from hours of arguments from the Trump legal team, who declared anew that no witness has testified to direct knowledge that Trump's delivery of aid was contingent on investigations into Democrats, though Bolton appeared poised to say exactly that if called on by the Senate to appear.

"We deal with transcript evidence, we deal with publicly available information," attorney Jay Sekulow said. "We do not deal with speculation, allegations that are not based on evidentiary standards at all."

Trump is charged with abusing his power by asking Ukraine's leader to help investigate Biden at the same time

SEE IMPEACHMENT, A4

ENVIRONMENT

Gov. unveils plan to wean from fossil fuels

Michael Sol Warren and Brent Johnson
For The Star-Ledger

New Jersey will become the first state in the nation to require builders to consider the impact of climate change if they want their projects approved, said Gov. Phil Murphy on Monday as he unveiled the final version of the state's new energy master plan.

During a speech at Stockton University in Galloway, the Democratic governor called the plan "ground zero" for "weaning the state off its century-old addiction to fossil fuels."

The 290-page document lays out the Murphy administration's vision for how to ensure the state reaches its lofty green energy goals: 50% clean energy by 2030, and 100% clean energy by 2050.

The plan is intended to slash the Garden State's greenhouse gas emissions, reducing New Jersey's contribution to climate change.

Murphy noted that a recent Rutgers University report showed sea levels along New Jersey's coast are expected to rise more than a foot by 2030 and 2 feet by 2050.

"Quite frankly, it will be hard for future generations to create their Jersey Shore memories if the Jersey Shore becomes only a memory," the governor said. "We are not gonna let this keep happening without a fight."

Murphy also painted this as a response to how President

SEE CLIMATE, A6

WILDWOOD

At the Jersey Shore, a red (hat) tide comes in

Chris Franklin *For The Star-Ledger*

There was cheering, drivers honking their horns, red vuvuzelas blowing out loud, strong tones into the chilly January air, which was filled with the scent of sausage and peppers cooking on a grill.

It wasn't exactly a tailgate party, but the atmosphere Monday outside the Wildwood Convention Center 24 hours before President Donald Trump's arrival was pretty close to it.

Hundreds of people stood in line or sat in their folding chairs outside Fox Park — some as early as 2 p.m. Sunday — waiting for the event site outside the convention center to open so they could officially get in line to guarantee their spot inside on Tuesday for Trump's "Keep America Great Rally." Only 7,500 people will be permitted inside.

As people sat in chairs, huddled in tents and stood while sipping coffee, tea and other beverages to keep warm, they conversed among each other about the president's policies and celebrating the event.

Across the street from Fox Park, Rocky Granata had an RV decked out in Trump buttons, flags and other pictures depicting Trump as movie characters such as Rocky. Playing from the speakers into the Wildwood streets were speeches Trump had given at various points of his presidency. Granata, who lives in Edison, said today's rally will be the 50th one he has attended.

"It is good to have the rally in the state of New Jersey,"

SEE WILDWOOD, A3

Danielle Ridorfino, of Trenton, takes in the surroundings as she waits in the event area of the Wildwoods Convention Center. *Tim Hawk, NJ Advance Media for The Star-Ledger*

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